

CHAPTER XIII

VOICE CHARM

A cheerful temper joined with innocence will make beauty attractive, knowledge delightful, and wit good-natured.

—JOSEPH ADDISON, *The Tattler*.

Poe said that “the tone of beauty is sadness,” but he was evidently thinking from cause to effect, not contrariwise, for sadness is rarely a producer of beauty—that is peculiarly the province of joy.

The exquisite beauty of a sunset is not exhilarating but tends to a sort of melancholy that is not far from delight. The haunting beauty of deep, quiet music holds more than a tinge of sadness. The lovely minor cadences of bird song at twilight are almost depressing.

The reason we are affected to sadness by certain forms of placid beauty is twofold: movement is stimulating and joy-producing, while quietude leads to reflection, and reflection in turn often brings out the tone of regretful longing for that which is past; secondly, quiet beauty produces a vague aspiration for the relatively unattainable, yet does not stimulate to the tremendous effort necessary to make the dimly desired state or object ours.

We must distinguish, for these reasons, between the sadness of beauty and the joy of beauty. True, joy is a deep, inner thing and takes in much more than the idea of bounding, sanguine spirits, for it includes a certain active contentedness of heart. In this chapter, however, the word will have its optimistic, exuberant connotation—we are thinking now of vivid, bright-eyed, laughing joy.

Musical, joyous tones constitute voice charm, a subtle magnetism that is delightfully contagious. Now it might seem to the desultory reader that to take the lancet and cut into this alluring voice quality would be to dissect a

butterfly wing and so destroy its charm. Yet how can we induce an effect if we are not certain as to the cause?

Nasal Resonance Produces the Bell-tones of the Voice

The tone passages of the nose must be kept entirely free for the bright tones of voice—and after our warning in the preceding chapter you will not confuse what is popularly and erroneously called a “nasal” tone with the true nasal quality, which is so well illustrated by the voice work of trained French singers and speakers.

To develop nasal resonance sing the following, dwelling as long as possible on the *ng* sounds. Pitch the voice in the nasal cavity. Practise both in high and low registers, and develop range—with *brightness*.

Sing-song. Ding-dong. Hong-kong. Long-thong.

Practise in the falsetto voice develops a bright quality in the normal speaking-voice. Try the following, and any other selections you choose, in a falsetto voice. A man’s falsetto voice is extremely high and womanish, so men should not practise in falsetto after the exercise becomes tiresome.

She perfectly scorned the best of his clan, and declared the ninth of any man, a perfectly vulgar fraction.

The actress Mary Anderson asked the poet Longfellow what she could do to improve her voice. He replied, “Read aloud daily, joyous, lyric poetry.”

The joyous tones are the bright tones. Develop them by exercise. Practise your voice exercises in an attitude of joy. Under the influence of pleasure the body expands, the tone passages open, the action of heart and lungs is accelerated, and all the primary conditions for good tone are established.

More songs float out from the broken windows of the negro cabins in the South than from the palatial homes on Fifth Avenue. Henry Ward Beecher said the happiest days of his life were not when he had become an international character, but when he was an unknown minister out in Lawrenceville, Ohio, sweeping his own church, and working as a carpenter to help pay the grocer. Happiness is largely an attitude of mind, of viewing life from the right angle. The optimistic attitude can be cultivated, and it will express itself in voice charm. A telephone company recently placarded this motto in their booths: "The Voice with the Smile Wins." It does. Try it.

Reading joyous prose, or lyric poetry, will help put smile and joy of soul into your voice. The following selections are excellent for practise.

REMEMBER that when you first practise these classics you are to give sole attention to two things: a joyous attitude of heart and body, and bright tones of voice. After these ends have been attained to your satisfaction, carefully review the principles of public speaking laid down in the preceding chapters and put them into practise as you read these passages again and again. *It would be better to commit each selection to memory.*

SELECTIONS FOR PRACTISE

FROM MILTON'S "L'ALLEGRO"

Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee
Jest, and youthful Jollity,
Quips and Cranks and wanton Wiles,
Nods and Becks, and wreathèd Smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live in dimple sleek,—
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his sides.

Come, and trip it as ye go
On the light fantastic toe;
And in thy right hand lead with thee
The mountain nymph, sweet Liberty:

And, if I give thee honor due,
Mirth, admit me of thy crew,
To live with her, and live with thee,
In unprovèd pleasures free;

To hear the lark begin his flight,
And singing, startle the dull Night
From his watch-tower in the skies,
Till the dappled Dawn doth rise;
Then to come in spite of sorrow,
And at my window bid good-morrow
Through the sweetbrier, or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine;
While the cock with lively din
Scatters the rear of darkness thin,
And to the stack, or the barn-door,
Stoutly struts his dames before;

Oft listening how the hounds and horn
Cheerly rouse the slumbering Morn,
From the side of some hoar hill,
Through the high wood echoing shrill;
Sometime walking, not unseen,
By hedge-row elms, on hillocks green,
Right against the eastern gate,
Where the great Sun begins his state,
Robed in flames and amber light,
The clouds in thousand liveries dight,
While the plowman near at hand
Whistles o'er the furrowed land,
And the milkmaid singing blithe,
And the mower whets his scythe,
And every shepherd tells his tale,
Under the hawthorn in the dale.

THE SEA

The sea, the sea, the open sea,
The blue, the fresh, the ever free;
Without a mark, without a bound,
It runneth the earth's wide regions round;

It plays with the clouds, it mocks the skies,
Or like a cradled creature lies.
I'm on the sea, I'm on the sea,
I am where I would ever be,
With the blue above and the blue below,
And silence wheresoe'er I go.
If a storm should come and awake the deep,
What matter? I shall ride and sleep.

I love, oh! how I love to ride
On the fierce, foaming, bursting tide,
Where every mad wave drowns the moon,
And whistles aloft its tempest tune,
And tells how goeth the world below,
And why the southwest wind doth blow!
I never was on the dull, tame shore
But I loved the great sea more and more,
And backward flew to her billowy breast,
Like a bird that seeketh her mother's nest,—
And a mother she was and is to me,
For I was born on the open sea.

The waves were white, and red the morn,
In the noisy hour when I was born;
The whale it whistled, the porpoise rolled,
And the dolphins bared their backs of gold;
And never was heard such an outcry wild,
As welcomed to life the ocean child.
I have lived, since then, in calm and strife,
Full fifty summers a rover's life,
With wealth to spend, and a power to range,
But never have sought or sighed for change:
And death, whenever he comes to me,
Shall come on the wide, unbounded sea!

—BARRY CORNWALL.

THE sun does not shine for a few trees and flowers, but for the wide world's joy. The lonely pine upon the mountain-top waves its sombre boughs, and cries, "Thou art my sun." And the little meadow violet lifts its cup of blue, and whispers with its perfumed breath, "Thou art my sun." And

the grain in a thousand fields rustles in the wind, and makes answer, “Thou art my sun.” And so God sits effulgent in Heaven, not for a favored few, but for the universe of life; and there is no creature so poor or so low that he may not look up with child-like confidence and say, “My Father! Thou art mine.”—HENRY WARD BEECHER.

THE LARK

Bird of the wilderness,
Blithesome and cumberless,
Sweet be thy matin o’er moorland and lea!
Emblem of happiness,
Blest is thy dwelling-place:
Oh, to abide in the desert with thee!
Wild is thy lay, and loud,
Far in the downy cloud,—
Love gives it energy; love gave it birth.
Where, on thy dewy wing
Where art thou journeying?
Thy lay is in heaven; thy love is on earth.

O’er fell and fountain sheen,
O’er moor and mountain green,
O’er the red streamer that heralds the day;
Over the cloudlet dim,
Over the rainbow’s rim,
Musical cherub, soar, singing, away!
Then, when the gloaming comes,
Low in the heather blooms,
Sweet will thy welcome and bed of love be!
Emblem of happiness,
Blest is thy dwelling-place.
Oh, to abide in the desert with thee!

—JAMES HOGG.

In joyous conversation there is an elastic touch, a delicate stroke, upon the central ideas, generally following a pause. This elastic touch adds vivacity to the voice. If you try repeatedly, it can be sensed by feeling the tongue strike the teeth. The entire absence of elastic touch in the voice can

be observed in the thick tongue of the intoxicated man. Try to talk with the tongue lying still in the bottom of the mouth, and you will obtain largely the same effect. Vivacity of utterance is gained by using the tongue to strike off the emphatic idea with a decisive, elastic touch.

Deliver the following with decisive strokes on the emphatic ideas. Deliver it in a vivacious manner, noting the elastic touch-action of the tongue. A flexible, responsive tongue is absolutely essential to good voice work.

*FROM NAPOLEON'S ADDRESS TO THE DIRECTORY ON HIS RETURN
FROM EGYPT*

What have you done with that brilliant France which I left you? I left you at peace, and I find you at war. I left you victorious, and I find you defeated. I left you the millions of Italy, and I find only spoliation and poverty. What have you done with the hundred thousand Frenchmen, my companions in glory? They are dead! . . . This state of affairs cannot last long; in less than three years it would plunge us into despotism.

Practise the following selection, for the development of elastic touch; say it in a joyous spirit, using the exercise to develop voice charm in *all* the ways suggested in this chapter.

THE BROOK

I come from haunts of coot and hern,
I make a sudden sally,
And sparkle out among the fern,
To bicker down a valley.

By thirty hills I hurry down,
Or slip between the ridges;
By twenty thorps, a little town,
And half a hundred bridges.

Till last by Philip's farm I flow

To join the brimming river;
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever.

I chatter over stony ways,
In little sharps and trebles,
I bubble into eddying bays,
I babble on the pebbles.

With many a curve my banks I fret,
By many a field and fallow,
And many a fairy foreland set
With willow-weed and mallow.

I chatter, chatter, as I flow
To join the brimming river;
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever.

I wind about, and in and out,
With here a blossom sailing,
And here and there a lusty trout,
And here and there a grayling,

And here and there a foamy flake
Upon me, as I travel,
With many a silvery water-break
Above the golden gravel.

And draw them all along, and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever.

I steal by lawns and grassy plots,
I slide by hazel covers,
I move the sweet forget-me-nots
That grow for happy lovers.

I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance,
Among my skimming swallows;
I make the netted sunbeam dance
Against my sandy shallows.

I murmur under moon and stars
In brambly wildernesses,

I linger by my shingly bars,
I loiter round my cresses.

And out again I curve and flow
To join the brimming river;
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever.

—ALFRED TENNYSON.

The children at play on the street, glad from sheer physical vitality, display a resonance and charm in their voices quite different from the voices that float through the silent halls of the hospitals. A skilled physician can tell much about his patient's condition from the mere sound of the voice. Failing health, or even physical weariness, tells through the voice. It is always well to rest and be entirely refreshed before attempting to deliver a public address. As to health, neither scope nor space permits us to discuss here the laws of hygiene. There are many excellent books on this subject. In the reign of the Roman emperor Tiberius, one senator wrote to another: "To the wise, a word is sufficient."

"The apparel oft proclaims the man;" the voice always does—it is one of the greatest revealers of character. The superficial woman, the brutish man, the reprobate, the person of culture, often discloses inner nature in the voice, for even the cleverest dissembler cannot entirely prevent its tones and qualities being affected by the slightest change of thought or emotion. In anger it becomes high, harsh, and unpleasant; in love low, soft, and melodious—the variations are as limitless as they are fascinating to observe. Visit a theatrical hotel in a large city, and listen to the buzz-saw voices of the chorus girls from some burlesque "attraction." The explanation is simple—buzz-saw lives. Emerson said: "When a man lives with God his voice shall be as sweet as the murmur of the brook or the rustle of the corn." It is impossible to think selfish thoughts and have either

an attractive personality, a lovely character, or a charming voice. If you want to possess voice charm, cultivate a deep, sincere sympathy for mankind. **Love** will shine out through your eyes and proclaim itself in your tones. One secret of the sweetness of the canary's song may be his freedom from tainted thoughts. Your **character** beautifies or mars your voice. As a man thinketh in his heart so is his **voice**.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. Define (*a*) charm; (*b*) joy; (*c*) beauty.
2. Make a list of all the words related to *joy*.
3. Write a three-minute eulogy of "The Joyful Man."
4. Deliver it without the use of notes. Have you carefully considered all the qualities that go to make up voice-charm in its delivery?
5. Tell briefly in your own words what means may be employed to develop a charming voice.
6. Discuss the effect of voice on character.
7. Discuss the effect of character on voice.
8. Analyze the voice charm of any speaker or singer you choose.
9. Analyze the defects of any given voice.
10. Make a short humorous speech imitating certain voice defects, pointing out reasons.
11. Commit the following stanza and interpret each phase of delight suggested or expressed by the poet.

An infant when it gazes on a light,
A child the moment when it drains the breast,
A devotee when soars the Host in sight,
An Arab with a stranger for a guest,
A sailor when the prize has struck in fight,
A miser filling his most hoarded chest,
Feel rapture; but not such true joy are reaping
As they who watch o'er what they love while
sleeping.